



Uncovering stories of those who served in the Great War.

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ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- Who were our relatives who were alive in 1914-1918? (K-12)
- How did our family and community impact the war effort in the armed forces or as volunteers? (6-12)
- How was life different 100 years ago for our ancestors and for our communities? (K-5)
- What artifacts exist within our family or wider community to remind us of World War I? (K-8 for family artifacts and 9-12 for community research)
- How can we connect with our family members and community to learn stories of the past?
- How can we share our stories with our classmates, school, and a broader audience through Ancestry.com?

SUMMARY: Elementary School (K-5): Students will work with their teachers and family to create a family tree to find names of ancestors who were alive during 1914-1918. AncestryK12, Fold3, and other websites will help students complete details of their tree. Once they have created a family tree, they will craft a letter to an ancestor who was an older child or an adult at the time of World War I. They will write a letter to their ancestor to ask about what life was like at that time period.

Middle School (6-8): In addition to tracing their family history to learn names of ancestors living around 1914-1918, students will conduct an oral history of family members who can help them illuminate as much as they can about their ancestors' lives. Students will conduct additional research to build a better idea of their ancestors' lives. Students will work to find any photographs or artifacts of their family that was living during World War I. Students will share stories of their family members with the class. Those who have artifacts of individuals who served in World War I will then collaborate with classmates to add images of those artifacts to Fold3.

High School (9-12): Students will investigate their family history as the middle school students did. They will also look more broadly into the community and find and document other World War I materials to share with their class and also add those images to Fold3. They will search for photographs, memorials, newspaper articles, letters, and all other artifacts that represent life and service during World War I.

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT: US History Content Standards
Era 7 – The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)

- Standard 2A: The student understands how the American role in the world changed in the early 20th century.
- Standard 2B: The student understands the causes of World War I and why the United States intervened.
- Standard 2C: The student understands the impact at home and abroad of the United States involvement in World War I.

Historical Thinking Standards

- Standard 2: The student comprehends a variety of historical sources.
- Standard 3: The student engages in historical analysis and interpretation.
- Standard 4: The student conducts historical research.

TIME NEEDED: Three to six 50-minute class periods

OBJECTIVES: *Students will:*

- Learn how to construct a family tree and bring the structure home to ask family members about names to include.
- Develop questions about what life was like for their ancestors, including questions about family, geographic location, day to day life, and knowledge

about the war.

- Elementary: Write a letter that asks an ancestor of theirs questions about what life was like and tell them about life around 2014.
- Middle: Develop interview questions and ask the person or people in their family most likely to know answers about family history. After conducting an oral history, they will develop a presentation to share with their class about what their ancestors' lives were like in 1914-1918.
- High: Investigate family history through oral history and broaden research to include World War I and its impact in the community. Through investigation into memorials, historical societies, museums, and other channels, students will share their documentation with classmates and, where suitable, on Fold3.

INTERDISCIPLINARY: History, Language Arts

- MATERIALS NEEDED:**
- Interviewing a family member guide (see Appendix A).
 - Family tree structure (see Appendix B).
 - Access to computers with internet connection (K-12).
 - Letter-writing materials (K-5).
 - Equipment to record audio and video of interviews and student presentations (6-12).

LESSON

DIRECTIONS:

1. Discuss family history briefly with students and ask if any students know which of their ancestors lived during 1914-1918.
2. Distribute the family tree guide (Appendix B) and have students begin filling out their information in class with the help of AncestryK12 resources to research family names. For homework, students can complete the family tree and build additional branches to make sure they trace their family history far enough back to find an ancestor who lived during 1914-1918 and would have been an older child or an adult at that time.
3. **Elementary** school students will then make a Venn diagram (two circles overlapping partially in the middle) either as a class or in small groups of four students. In one circle, they will write about what life today is like (circa 2014) and in the other circle, they will write about how they imagine life was different one hundred years ago (circa 1914) when the World War I began. If students work in groups, make sure to help them by prompting them with questions and then allow time to share at the end.
4. **Elementary** school students will write a letter to an ancestor of theirs who was alive in the 1914-1918 period and ask questions about what life was like in that era. They will base these questions off their Venn diagrams as a chance to practice the important research step of asking questions. For example, students might ask how they learn the news of what is happening in the world or if they go to the grocery store to get food. Student letters can be shared and displayed at the end of the project.
5. **Middle** school and **high** school students will also begin their project with a family tree using family conversation and AncestryK12 resources to complete that tree enough generations to find names of ancestors who lived during the 1914-1918 era.
6. Instead of a letter, **middle** school and **high** school students will think of an adult in their lives (parent, grandparent, great-grandparent?) who is likely to be most knowledgeable about family history. They will prepare to interview that person for an oral history to find out as much as they can about their ancestor(s) who lived one hundred years ago. They can brainstorm first how they imagine life was different and they can ask questions about volunteerism or service in the armed forces to uncover how their family was impacted by World War I. Make sure to ask if there are any artifacts available from that time period – letters, photos, clothing, toys, etc. (See Appendix A for some sample questions.)
7. After interviewing for homework, **middle** and **high** school students should use their notes and audio/video recording to develop a presentation about their ancestor's life to share with the class. For any artifacts of people who served in the armed forces or volunteered during World War I, you can add images of those artifacts along with their story to Fold3's Honor Wall to honor those who served in the first global conflict. Visit <http://www.fold3.com/wall/wwi/> to contribute to this collaborative effort.
8. Present to the class – optional time for students to create a video or an oral presentation they will deliver in which they tell about the stories they heard, the challenges of learning about an ancestor who lived one hundred years ago, and anything that surprised them in what had been remembered, saved, or forgotten between generations.
9. **High** school students will broaden their research to include investigation into contributions to the war effort from community members. They will learn names and stories of soldiers and volunteers through investigations of local memorials, monuments, cemeteries, history museums, historical societies, libraries, or stories of other families in the community.

POST-ASSESSMENT:

Students can share their process of what they learned about the recording of history, the importance of artifacts and photographs for preserving memory, and the lessons learned about individuals who made sacrifices for the country one hundred years ago.

- What did you learn about your ancestors?
- How clearly are your ancestors' lives remembered?
- What remains unknown about your ancestors' lives one hundred years ago?
- How do artifacts and photographs help tell a life story?
- How can you add to the creation of history?
- What did you learn about World War I from your research?

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Appendix A:

Interviewing a Family Member

Oral history sample questions to ask about the ancestor you identify who lived during 1914-1918 era:

1. Where did ___ grow up?
2. Do you remember any stories about ___?
3. Who told you the stories you know about ___?
4. What was ___ ethnic background?
5. Where were ___ parents from?
6. Did ___ serve in World War I? In the military? As a volunteer?
7. Was ___ affected by World War I?
8. Do you have or know about any photos or artifacts that belonged to ___ from 1914-1918 era?
 - a. How did you get this photo/artifact?
 - b. What is its significance?

Add many more questions of your own to find out as much as you can about your ancestor and any artifacts that remain.

Appendix B: Family Tree

Student's name:
Birth date:
Birthplace:

Father's name:
Birth date:
Birthplace:

Mother's name:
Birth date:
Birthplace:

Grandfather's name:
Birth date:
Birthplace:

Grandmother's name:
Birth date:
Birthplace:

Grandfather's name:
Birth date:
Birthplace:

Grandmother's name:
Birth date:
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Great Grandfather's name:
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